

SUOMI

THE
REPUBLIC FARTHEST
NORTH



By
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IN
"Stock & Dairy Farmer"

SUOMI, better known as Finland, is the northernmost republic in the world, lying, like an infant, in the arms of the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland. The population is nearly four million, its area is 144,255 square miles and about one-eighth of this is lakes and rivers. The greater part of the country is covered with forests. The southern part of the country, together with a large part of the western part, is surrounded by seas that afford many seaports and harbor. The winter port at Petsamo assures an open route for trade with the world throughout the year.

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Suomi, the country where the writer first saw the light of day, has of late received unusual attention from the people of the United States. I should like to guide my readers through the beautiful land of a thousand lakes—I should say tens of thousands—and tell what I know of Suomi, though I am restricted in space.

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The chief industries of Suomi are: Agriculture, dairying, forestry, lumbering and the manufacture of paper. The exports are: products of wood, both finished and unfinished; pulpwood and paper; butter, cheese, and other dairy products. England, Germany, France and the United States are the principal buyers. When speaking of the forests of Suomi it is well to remember that the value of the forests there is the greatest in all Europe, excepting Russia. Three-fourths of the country is covered by scientifically cared for forests and increases the wealth of the country ten per cent annually. Our own forest experts declare that the timber lands of Suomi are the best cared for in the world.

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Regardless of the world-wide depression the economical condition of Suomi is in excellent shape. The unemployment question is not as serious as it is in many countries of Europe. Labor difficulties are seldom heard of and plans for relief work were laid out before the times became critical. During past years the exports have been considerably greater than the imports. At the end of September trade conditions showed more than a billion marks credit though the fiscal year was not yet ended. The Finnish mark is well on its way to stabilization. During the past year the confidence of the United States in Suomi has increased greatly, as this little country has been prompt in paying her war debt to Uncle Sam.

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The culture of Suomi is abreast with the Scandinavian countries, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Illiteracy is the

least of any nation on earth, only nine-tenths of one per cent. Public school education is compulsory and institutions for higher education are found not only in the cities but also in the country. The Finnish farmer has both a practical and a scientific training.

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In Finnish music—suffice it to mention only one name—Jean Sibelius. And in Finnish architecture we shall only mention one name, that of Eliel Saarinen, who gave so much to the United States and is now living here. He has gained fame all over the world. The same is true of the other arts; painting, sculpture, the opera and the play, and literature have awakened interest by their originality. Kalevala, the national epic, has been and still is the source of inspiration for different artists. The various Finnish exhibitions have received much attention in the principal cities of the world. The latest was in Italy, where Suomi was given second place.

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The co-operative movement has spread over the country and is used in many different phases of life. The important public utilities are owned by the government, the railroads, telephone and electric plants, much of the forests and mines. The government also has possession of some large farms and factories.

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But what can Suomi offer a tourist?

When an ocean liner glides past innumerable islands along the shores of Suomi and drops anchor into the harbor of the much admired "White City of the North," Helsinki (Helsingfors), the city at once attracts attention. The city is beautiful from the distance, but the better one becomes acquainted with it, the more attractive one finds it. The population is about 300,000. It is very modern in its buildings. All tourists have been impressed by the cleanliness of the city. But as attractive as the city is with its sight-seeing places, the greatest interest is in the beautiful lakes, woods and the picturesque old castles and churches which are found in different parts of the country. In summer the tourist falls under the spell of the white nights. By the end of June the sun does not set at all. Especially in the northern parts of the country one can see the sun dropping toward the horizon, but almost at once it appears to rise again. This gives the nights of Suomi a mystical fascination that, once experienced, can never be forgotten.

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The charm reaches its climax at Petsamo, on the shores of the Arctic, where Nature is undisturbed in its ruggedness and

the Lapps with their large reindeer herds make the country truly the land of Santa Claus as it was pictured in our papers during the Christmas season. The tourist movement into Petsamo has increased year by year. An excellent highway makes traveling there by automobile possible and pleasant.

Although Suomi has no snowcapped mountains, delighted tourists have given it the name "Switzerland of the North."

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Fascinating as is the trip northward, it is contrasted in luxuriant scenery at the monastery of Valamo in eastern Suomi on an archipelago in Lake Ladoga. The monks still living there greet the guests and with pleasure show them their cultivations, their dense forests and their churches.

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Suomi has long been known for its athletes. And this one thing was the first to attract the attention of the outside world toward this small republic. But in later years it has drawn the attention of others by its progress and the natural beauty of the country. Tourists have written and spoken their praise in papers and in books published as a result of their visits, and so have made this far northern republic better known to the world. Suomi has thus acquired new, true friends. Many a visit has been made by people from our own country to see the activities of this younger sister, who so recently has become ruler over her own destinies.

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In recent years a number of Americans have taken a trip to Suomi, among them have been students, authors, newspaper men, writers, business representatives and government officials. We have been well represented in many of the international conventions held there. All those who have been there have expressed their delight and pleasure both in the scenery the country offers and the people they met. Among those we wish to recall is Mr. Brodie, who was the American minister at Helsinki recently, whose daughter married there and has made her home in Suomi. The country, its people and its climate were all well spoken of when he returned to his home in Oregon.

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My short presentation of Suomi does not deal with everything that could be said of it, yet I hope this will be an inspiration to some reader to get a better acquaintance with Suomi, the country, who alone stood back of her war debts to Uncle Sam and perhaps be encouraged to go and visit that land of the midnight sun in some future summer.